

*Book Reviews***Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to The Theory of Knowledge**, by Robert Audi. New York: Routledge, 2011.

BIBLID [0873-626X (2012) 33; pp. 540-545]

Audi's (third) introduction to the theory of knowledge is a magnificent work and an excellent tool. It is very well organized and displays much information about a huge amount of epistemological and philosophical problems. If we compare this edition with the previous one (2003), we can see that there are now more sections dedicated to issues which were not addressed before. We now have sections about perceptual justification and perceptual knowledge, internalist and externalist versions of virtue epistemology, the value problem, and theories of truth. This increase of information and debates makes this introduction even more comprehensive and attractive than its predecessors. So if the previous editions were already great in almost every aspect, this one is even better.

Having said that, we must point out that Audi's book is not for the fainted of heart, nor it is really a *simple* introduction to epistemology *stricto sensu*, at least not as we construe a simple introduction (see, for example, Lemos, N., *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, New York, 2007; and Pritchard, D., *What is This Thing Called Knowledge*, Oxon, 2006). Comprehensiveness has often costs for the beginner. The high amount of information displayed in Audi's work may be useful for a number of reasons, but has a serious downside: it is hard to cope with (perhaps even to people with some experience). We are talking about valuable and wide-ranging information, no doubt, but when confronted by it, the reader may very well feel a bit intimidated. This and the inherent complexities associated with the topics at hand may difficult things for the reader with no previous contact with those topics. And since Audi is a philosopher within the analytical tradition, he strives to do the analysis of almost every concept he presents. Furthermore, an argument looms in every page (or on most of the pages). Perhaps this is a good strategy. Some may be charmed by the book style and passionately read it from the first to the last page, but some may feel frightened and leave it on the library. Be as it may, one thing is quite certain: this introduction is not for the masses, in the sense that it is not exactly easy for the layman to read and understand.

As before, Audi's introduction to the content of the book is in fact a small introduction to the theory of knowledge. It is a classical

ouverture ranging over traditional problems in the area: What can we know? What are the sources of evidence, justification, knowledge and, ultimately, truth? What *can* and *should* we believe given the available evidence? What grounds and justifies our beliefs? And so forth. Argumentative answers to these questions are given across the volume. This is why we think that Audi's work is also *an* introductory theory of knowledge rather than *just* an introduction to *the* theory of knowledge.

Another aspect worth mentioning is that this book is not only an introduction to the theory of knowledge but also an introduction to the theory of justification.

One must not be surprised by this, given that the knowledge issues and the justification issues have been linked for so long in the history of philosophy (since Plato, according to many specialists), and chiefly in the second half of the twentieth century, because of the well-known Gettier Problem. As in his earlier works on justification, and following a long standing trend in epistemology, Audi main concern lies on the grounding of belief. The debate over what appropriately grounds belief cut-crosses the entire work and, in one way or another, drives the author's pencil, motivations and arguments. So just like Chisholm's three theories of knowledge (but mostly the first two), Audi's introduction is also a state of the art manual about evidence and justification. If nothing else was good, just that would be a sufficient reason to get the book. But since almost everything else is good, this is a *plus* for the lucky reader.

Now, since we are challenged by an extensive and wide-ranging work, it is impossible to comment on everything. So we chose to stress only what seems to us excellent and what, in our opinion, is not so good.

Concerning Part One, on the sources of knowledge, the presentation about the available theories of perception is very good indeed. It is exhaustive and has the right sequence. It allows the reader to understand quite well the problems surrounding perception (mostly vision) and the importance of this source in the economics of knowledge and justification. And the same can be said about the memory presentation. The theoretical resemblance of the theories of perception and the theories of memory is used to facilitate the explanation and the understanding. And the section about introspection is perfectly structured as well. Here (p. 91) we find a first approach to

the solipsism problem and, of course, to skepticism about the existence of other minds.

The first section about reason (5) is excellent because of the overall quality of the presentation, but mainly because it allows the reader to cope with traditionally hard problems about truths of reason. The distinction between necessary, analytic, *a priori*, and synthetic propositions (according to the way they are or the way they are grasped) is very useful. Though a bit technical, the given explanation on these 'modalities' can help the beginner to deal with the tremendous amount of complications usually steaming for philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology. On the other hand, the second section about reason (6) will be for sure very useful to instructors and non-beginner students. It is a natural follow up of its antecessor, going deeper inside the matters of definition and of hybrid propositions (e.g., analytic *a priori*). It is even possible to find on a graphic (see Figure 6.1., p. 139) a typology of the classic and revised views about these combinations. The attention placed on the *a priori*, generally conceived, and on the *a priori* justification, is extensive (see Figure 6.2., p. 144). Again, by reading this section one can 'feel' the influential role that philosophy of language and metaphysics take in the epistemological debate.

On the section about testimony as a source of knowledge we can find a good debate over the issue of whether or not testimony is indeed a *basic* source for knowledge and justification (p. 159). Audi argues that it is not (p. 161), but stresses the relevance of testimonial grounds for belief justification and, therefore, to many belief-candidates to knowledge. Also interesting and well put is the view that though testimony is not a *basic* source of knowledge it is a *primeval* source of knowledge.

Concerning Part Two. First a comment on the inference and the extension of knowledge section (8). We would like to underline the intrinsic difficulty of this section. As we said earlier, Audi's book may be harsh to the novice and the layman. Let me illustrate with a passage:

Suppose we conceive his reasoning as deductive, say because Luigi's *underlying* principle—roughly, the one by which his reasoning is actually guided—is not the expected inductive one—that all if all *As* are *Bs* and *x* is a *B* of a kind that might well be expected to be an *A* then *probably* *x* is

an *A*—but the false principle that if all *As* are *Bs*, and *x* is a *B* of a kind that might be expected to be an *A*, then *x* is (certainly) an *A*. (p. 188)

This is a bit difficult to follow, but maybe this particular explanation could not be done otherwise. Nevertheless, it is comprehensiveness at the cost of simplification.

One crucial notion about inference entertained by Audi along these pages is that inference is not a *basic* source of justification of knowledge or justification. According to him, inference is just a way to transmit them, but in order for the transmission to occur the starting premises must *already* be justified and knowledge (p. 191). And yet another important moment of his assessment of these matters has to do with the way that deductive inferences are valid and inductive inferences are ‘good’. All of this is very well explained and argued for, so we encourage the reader to try reading these chapters, regardless of their difficulty.

The second section of Part Two is dedicated to the old subject of how the knowledge belief candidates must be related in order to be justified and knowledge. The section (9) is dubbed *the architecture of knowledge*, and it is as its predecessors very comprehensive and informative. Here Audi deals with the various hypotheses available concerning the *shape* of the chain of beliefs (and justifications). His evaluation goes beyond the usual quadripartite account of the chain: foundationalism, coherentism, infinitism and skepticism (the latter if the chain of beliefs ends in a belief which is not knowledge or it is not in any way justified). At the end, Audi takes a non-neutral stance towards the problem, arguing for what it is there called moderate foundationalism. He thinks that this sort of foundationalism has less problems (or easier to solve problems) than the other hypotheses, mainly coherentism, and so it is preferable to them.

In the Part Three of introduction we find a conflation of several themes. The first section (10) concerns the problem of the analysis of knowledge. Here we can see that Audi still (considering his previous works on the subject) embraces the idea that knowledge *is* some sort of reliably formed, properly grounded, true belief (see p. 291). One must do justice to the author and say that he does not *intend* to offer an analysis, and that he warn us about the problems faced by any candidate to a successful analysis. He explicitly claims that he is not offering an *analysis* of knowledge but a *conception* of knowledge (see note 20, p. 294). But he also leaves an open door for the analysis

possibility (see the same note), and his so-called conception of knowledge very much seems a disguised analysis of knowledge. Now, if there is a lesson (familiar to Audi, for sure) to be extracted from the *aftermath* of the Gettier prominent paper is that no analysis of 'S knows that *p*' in terms of 'true justified (plus condition *c*) belief' will do the job, i.e., will satisfied all the theoretical and epistemic *desiderata* for a successful analysis. Furthermore, there is little information on Williamson's arguments (in our view decisive) against the possibility of such a successful analysis. All this seems to go against Audi's position concerning this theme.

The second section (11) of Part Three returns to the subject of justification and its origins. Here Audi engages the topics of internalism and externalism (about justification and about knowledge). He introduces a new subsection devoted to intellectual virtues and their role in the internalist-externalist divide. The following debate over the value of knowledge is also a novelty in his theory of knowledge. Broadly speaking, he holds that knowledge is more valuable than true belief *simpliciter* or than justified true belief. He thinks that the latter is valuable because of pragmatic reasons, chiefly because justified true belief, whether or not knowledge, may always contribute to understanding and perhaps to other cognitive achievements. We think this can be disputed. It may be argued, for example, that justified true belief which is *not* knowledge cannot be treasured in light of the problems which preclude that it is knowledge. Luckily justified true beliefs and justified fortuitously true beliefs can hardly be valuable, unless they are taken as a crucial element of a cognitive *process*. This may happen, but it is not the rule, so we think that Audi's argument here is far from being convincing.

Yet in this section we get some information about truth. The main theories of truth are introduced with simplicity but also with efficiency. The reader becomes more acquainted with a crucial element associated with knowledge that theorists often leave outside their debates or take as peripheral, mostly because they think that truth is a subject for metaphysics and philosophy of language, rather than for epistemology. At the end, Audi declares (p. 290) that the best choice for those (like him, so it seems) that embrace an account of knowledge as reliably grounded belief is a moderate account of truth as correspondence. Again, this shows that we are not, for the best or the worst, face to face with a *neutral* introduction to the theory of knowledge. The reader is allowed to choose his path, but the presen-

tation is argumentative towards specific conceptions of truth, knowledge and justification.

Section 12 is dedicated to introduce the specific proprieties and problems of three types of knowledge: the scientific, the moral and the religious. The presentation is broad but very enlightening, allowing once more the reader to become quite well acquainted with the basics. But once again it is argumentative here and there, trying to convince the reader about a particular view. For example, in the debate over whether or not religious knowledge (knowledge of the divinities and their deeds) is possible (p. 320), Audi clearly assumes the role of the religious paladin, seeking to defend the possibility of that kind of knowledge. He argues for the plausibility of his own so-called experincialism, a sort of *direct* acquaintance of the mind with religious truths or facts. This should not be by itself a reason to criticize Audi's work, but one cannot escape the thought that maybe an introduction to the theory of knowledge is not the right place to defend our own religious preferences, even if supported by arguments.

Audi ends the volume with two amazing chapters about skepticism. He is not a skeptic, as we saw before, and that becomes very clear on these chapters. He deals perfectly well with the main issues around fallibility and error, epistemological relativism and the difference between common sense views of knowledge and hypothetical skeptical scenarios.

Audi's book is the best and most complete introductory work to the theory of knowledge we have read so far. We think that it is an indispensable piece on the bookshelves of every instructor of epistemology and a fine acquisition to those who wish to enter deep into the subjects of knowledge and justification.

Luís Estevinha Rodrigues
Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa
Faculdade de Letras, Alameda da Universidade
1600-214 Lisboa
lufiro@gmail.com